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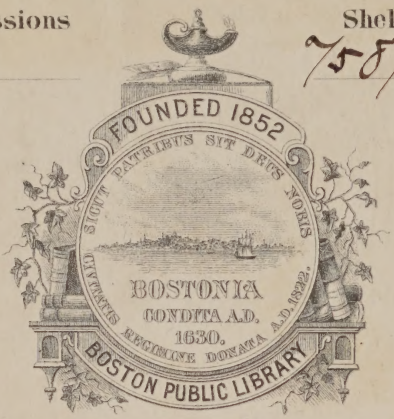


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# CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN

# LYDIA MARIA CHILD

AND

# GOV. WISE AND MRS. MASON,

OF VIRGINIA.

PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

1860.

From Rch. O. 4265.64

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June 26, 1882

# CORRESPONDENCE.

## LETTER TO GOV. WISE.

WAYLAND, Mass., Oct. 26th, 1859.

GOVERNOR WISE: I have heard that you were a man of chivalrous sentiments, and I know you were opposed to the iniquitous attempt to force upon Kansas a constitution abhorrent to the moral sense of her people. Relying upon these indications of honor and justice in your character, I venture to ask a favor of you. Enclosed is a letter to Capt. John Brown. Will you have the kindness, after reading it yourself, to transmit it to the prisoner?

I and all my large circle of abolition acquaintances were taken by surprise when news came of Capt. Brown's recent attempt; nor do I know of a single person who would have approved of it had they been apprised of his intention. But I and thousands of others feel a natural impulse of sympathy for the brave and suffering man. Perhaps God, who sees the inmost of our souls, perceives some such sentiment in your heart also. He needs a mother or sister to dress his wounds, and speak soothingly to him. Will you allow me to perform that mission of humanity? If you will, may God bless you for the generous deed!

I have been for years an uncompromising abolitionist, and I should scorn to deny it or apologize for it as much as John Brown himself would do. Believing in peace principles, I deeply regret the step that the old veteran has taken, while I honor his humanity towards those who became his prisoners. But because it is my habit to be as open as the daylight, I

will also say that if I believed our religion justified men in fighting for freedom, I should consider the enslaved everywhere as best entitled to that right. Such an avowal is a simple, frank expression of my sense of natural justice.

But I should despise myself utterly if any circumstances could tempt me to seek to advance these opinions in any way, directly or indirectly, after your permission to visit Virginia has been obtained on the plea of sisterly sympathy with a brave and suffering man. I give you my word of honor, which was never broken, that I would use such permission solely and singly for the purpose of nursing your prisoner, and for no other purpose whatsoever.

Yours, respectfully,

L. MARIA CHILD.

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## REPLY OF GOV. WISE.

RICHMOND, Va., Oct. 29th, 1859.

MADAM: Yours of the 26th was received by me yesterday, and at my earliest leisure I respectfully reply to it, that I will forward the letter for John Brown, a prisoner under our laws, arraigned at the bar of the Circuit Court for the county of Jefferson, at Charlestown, Va., for the crimes of murder, robbery and treason, which you ask me to transmit to him. I will comply with your request in the only way which seems to me proper, by enclosing it to the Commonwealth's attorney, with the request that he will ask the permission of the Court to hand it to the prisoner. Brown, the prisoner, is now in the hands of the judiciary, not of the executive of this Commonwealth.

You ask me, further, to allow you to perform the mission "of mother or sister, to dress his wounds and speak soothingly to him." By this, of course, you mean to be allowed to visit him in his cell, and to minister to him in the offices of humanity. Why should you not be so allowed, Madam? Virginia and Massachusetts are involved in no civil war, and the Con-

stitution which unites them in one confederacy guarantees to you privileges and immunities of a citizen of the United States in the State of Virginia. That Constitution I am sworn to support, and am, therefore, bound to protect your privileges and immunities as a citizen of Massachusetts coming into Virginia for any lawful and peaceful purpose.

Coming, as you propose, to minister to the captive in prison, you will be met, doubtless, by all our people, not only in a chivalrous, but in a Christian spirit. You have the right to visit Charlestown, Va., Madam; and your mission being merciful and humane, will not only be allowed, but respected, if not welcomed. A few unenlightened and inconsiderate persons, fanatical in their modes of thought and action, to maintain justice and right, might molest you, or be disposed to do so; and this might suggest the imprudence of risking any experiment upon the peace of a society very much excited by the crimes with whose chief author you seem to sympathize so much. But still, I repeat, your motives and avowed purpose are lawful and peaceful, and I will, as far as I am concerned, do my duty in protecting your rights in our limits. Virginia and her authorities would be weak indeed — weak in point of folly, and weak in point of power — if her State faith and constitutional obligations cannot be redeemed in her own limits to the letter of morality as well as of law; and if her chivalry cannot courteously receive a lady's visit to a prisoner, every arm which guards Brown from rescue on the one hand, and from lynch law on the other, will be ready to guard your person in Virginia.

I could not permit an insult even to woman in her walk of charity among us, though it be to one who whetted knives of butchery for our mothers, sisters, daughters and babes. We have no sympathy with your sentiments of sympathy with Brown, and are surprised that you were "taken by surprise when news came of Capt. Brown's recent attempt." His attempt was a natural consequence of your sympathy, and the errors of that sympathy ought to make you doubt its virtue from the effect on his conduct. But it is not of this I should speak. When you arrive at Charlestown, if you go there, it will be for the Court and its officers, the Commonwealth's attorney, sheriff and jailer, to say whether you may see and wait on the prisoner. But, whether you are thus permitted

or not, (and you will be, if my advice can prevail,) you may rest assured that he will be humanely, lawfully and mercifully dealt by in prison and on trial.

Respectfully,

HENRY A. WISE.

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## MRS. CHILD TO GOV. WISE.

In your civil but very diplomatic reply to my letter, you inform me that I have a constitutional right to visit Virginia, for peaceful purposes, in common with every citizen of the United States. I was perfectly well aware that such was the *theory* of constitutional obligation in the Slave States; but I was also aware of what you omit to mention, viz.: that the Constitution has, in reality, been completely and systematically nullified whenever it suited the convenience or the policy of the Slave Power. Your constitutional obligation, for which you profess so much respect, has never proved any protection to citizens of the Free States, who happened to have a black, brown, or yellow complexion; nor to any white citizen whom you even suspected of entertaining opinions opposite to your own, on a question of vast importance to the temporal welfare and moral example of our common country. This total disregard of constitutional obligation has been manifested not merely by the Lynch Law of mobs in the Slave States, but by the deliberate action of magistrates and legislators. What regard was paid to constitutional obligation in South Carolina, when Massachusetts sent the Hon. Mr. Hoar there as an envoy, on a purely legal errand? Mr. Hedrick, Professor of Political Economy in the University of North Carolina, had a constitutional right to reside in that State. What regard was paid to that right, when he was driven from his home, merely for declaring that he considered Slavery an impolitic system, injurious to the prosperity of States? What respect for constitutional rights was manifested by Alabama, when a bookseller in Mobile was compelled to flee for his life, because he had, at the special request of some of the citizens, imported a few copies of a novel that everybody was curious

to read? Your own citizen, Mr. Underwood, had a constitutional right to live in Virginia, and vote for whomsoever he pleased. What regard was paid to his rights, when he was driven from your State for declaring himself in favor of the election of Fremont? With these, and a multitude of other examples before your eyes, it would seem as if the less that was said about respect for constitutional obligations at the South, the better. Slavery is, in fact, an infringement of all law, and adheres to no law, save for its own purposes of oppression.

You accuse Captain John Brown of "whetting knives of butchery for the mothers, sisters, daughters, and babes" of Virginia; and you inform me of the well-known fact that he is "arraigned for the crimes of murder, robbery and treason." I will not here stop to explain why I believe that old hero to be no criminal, but a martyr to righteous principles which he sought to advance by methods sanctioned by his own religious views, though not by mine. Allowing that Capt. Brown did attempt a scheme in which murder, robbery and treason were, to his own consciousness, involved, I do not see how Gov. Wise can consistently arraign him for crimes he has himself commended. *You* have threatened to trample on the Constitution, and break the Union, if a majority of the legal voters in these Confederated States dared to elect a President unfavorable to the extension of Slavery. Is not such a declaration proof of premeditated treason? In the Spring of 1842, you made a speech in Congress, from which I copy the following: —

"Once set before the people of the Great Valley the conquest of the rich Mexican Provinces, and you might as well attempt to stop the wind. This Government might send its troops, but they would run over them like a herd of buffalo. Let the work once begin, and I do not know that this House would hold *me* very long. Give me five millions of dollars, and I would undertake to do it myself. Although I do not know how to set a single squadron in the field, I could find men to do it. Slavery should pour itself abroad, without restraint, and find no limit but the Southern Ocean. The Camanches should no longer hold the richest mines of Mexico. Every golden image which had received the profanation of a false worship, should soon be melted down into good American eagles. I would cause as much gold to cross the Rio del Norte as the mules of Mexico could carry; aye, and I would make better use of it, too, than any lazy, bigoted priesthood under heaven."

When you thus boasted that you and your "booted loafers" would overrun the troops of the United States "like a herd of

buffalo," if the Government sent them to arrest your invasion of a neighboring nation, at peace with the United States, did you not pledge yourself to commit treason? Was it not by robbery, even of churches, that you proposed to load the mules of Mexico with gold for the United States? Was it not by the murder of unoffending Mexicans that you expected to advance those schemes of avarice and ambition? What humanity had you for Mexican "mothers and babes," whom you proposed to make childless and fatherless? And for what purpose was this wholesale massacre to take place? Not to right the wrongs of any oppressed class; not to sustain any great principles of justice, or of freedom; but merely to enable "Slavery to pour itself forth without restraint."

Even if Captain Brown were as bad as you paint him, I should suppose he must naturally remind you of the words of Macbeth:

> "We but teach
> Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
> To plague the inventor: This even-handed justice
> Commends the ingredients of our poisoned chalice
> To our own lips."

If Captain Brown intended, as you say, to commit treason, robbery, and murder, I think I have shown that he could find ample authority for such proceedings in the public declarations of Gov. Wise. And if, as he himself declares, he merely intended to free the oppressed, where could he read a more forcible lesson than is furnished by the State Seal of Virginia? I looked at it thoughtfully before I opened your letter; and though it had always appeared to me very suggestive, it never seemed to me so much so as it now did in connection with Captain John Brown. A liberty-loving hero stands with his foot upon a prostrate despot; under his strong arm, manacles and chains lie broken; and the motto is, "*Sic Semper Tyrannis;*" "Thus be it ever done to Tyrants." And this is the blazon of a State whose most profitable business is the internal Slave-Trade! — in whose highways coffles of human chattels, chained and manacled, are frequently seen! And the Seal and the Coffles are both looked upon by other chattels, constantly exposed to the same fate! What if some Vezey, or Nat Turner, should be growing up among those apparently quiet spectators? It is in no spirit of taunt or of

exultation that I ask this question. I never think of it but with anxiety, sadness, and sympathy. I know that a slave-holding community necessarily lives in the midst of gunpowder; and, in this age, sparks of free thought are flying in every direction. You cannot quench the fires of free thought and human sympathy by any process of cunning or force; but there is a method by which you can effectually wet the gunpowder. England has already tried it, with safety and success. Would that you could be persuaded to set aside the prejudices of education, and candidly examine the actual working of that experiment! Virginia is so richly endowed by nature that Free Institutions alone are wanting to render her the most prosperous and powerful of the States.

In your letter you suggest that such a scheme as Captain Brown's is the natural result of the opinions with which I sympathize. Even if I thought this to be a correct statement, though I should deeply regret it, I could not draw the conclusion that humanity ought to be stifled, and truth struck dumb, for fear that long-successful despotism might be endangered by their utterance. But the fact is, you mistake the source of that strange outbreak. No abolition arguments or denunciations, however earnestly, loudly, or harshly proclaimed, would have produced that result. It was the legitimate consequence of the continual, and constantly-increasing aggressions of the Slave Power. The Slave States, in their desperate efforts to sustain a bad and dangerous institution, have encroached more and more upon the liberties of the Free States. Our inherent love of law and order, and our superstitious attachment to the Union, you have mistaken for cowardice; and rarely have you let slip any opportunity to add insult to aggression.

The manifested opposition to Slavery began with the lectures and pamphlets of a few disinterested men and women, who based their movements upon purely moral and religious grounds; but their expostulations were met with a storm of rage, with tar and feathers, brickbats, demolished houses, and other applications of Lynch law. When the dust of the conflict began to subside a little, their numbers were found to be greatly increased by the efforts to exterminate them. They had become an influence in the State too important to be overlooked by shrewd calculators. Political economists began to

look at the subject from a lower point of view. They used their abilities to demonstrate that Slavery was a wasteful system, and that the Free States were taxed, to an enormous extent, to sustain an institution which, at heart, two-thirds of them abhorred. The forty millions, or more, of dollars, expended in hunting Fugitive Slaves in Florida, under the name of the Seminole War, were adduced, as one item in proof, to which many more were added. At last, politicians were compelled to take some action on the subject. It soon became known to all the people that the Slave States had always managed to hold in their hands the political power of the Union, and that while they constituted only one-third of the white population of these States, they held more than two-thirds of all the lucrative, and once honorable offices; an indignity to which none but a subjugated people had ever before submitted. The knowledge also became generally diffused, that while the Southern States *owned* their Democracy at home, and voted for them, they also systematically *bribed* the nominally Democratic party, at the North, with the offices adroitly kept at their disposal.

Through these, and other instrumentalities, the sentiments of the original Garrisonian Abolitionists became very widely extended, in forms more or less diluted. But by far the most efficient co-laborers we have ever had have been the Slave States themselves. By denying us the sacred Right of Petition, they roused the free spirit of the North, as it never could have been roused by the loud trumpet of Garrison, or the soul-animating bugle of Phillips. They bought the great slave, Daniel, and, according to their established usage, paid him no wages for his labor. By his co-operation they forced the Fugitive Slave law upon us, in violation of all our humane instincts and all our principles of justice. And what did they procure for the Abolitionists by that despotic process? A deeper and wider detestation of Slavery throughout the Free States, and the publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin, an eloquent outburst of moral indignation, whose echoes wakened the world to look upon their shame.

By fillibustering and fraud, they dismembered Mexico, and having thus obtained the soil of Texas, they tried to introduce it as a Slave State into the Union. Failing to effect their purpose by constitutional means, they accomplished it by a

most open and palpable violation of the Constitution, and by obtaining the votes of Senators on false pretences. (1)

Soon afterward, a Southern Slave Administration ceded to the powerful monarchy of Great Britain several hundred thousands of square miles, that must have been made into Free States, to which that same Administration had declared that the United States had "an unquestionable right;" and then they turned upon the weak Republic of Mexico, and, in order to make more Slave States, wrested from her twice as many hundred thousands of square miles, to which we had not a shadow of right.

Notwithstanding all these extra efforts, they saw symptoms that the political power so long held with a firm grasp was in danger of slipping from their hands, by reason of the extension of Abolition sentiments and the greater prosperity of Free States. Emboldened by continual success in aggression, they made use of the pretence of "Squatter Sovereignty" to break the league into which they had formerly cajoled the servile representatives of our blinded people, by which all the territory of the United States south of 36 30 was guaranteed to Slavery, and all north of it to Freedom. Thus Kansas became the battle-ground of the antagonistic elements in our Government. Ruffians hired by the Slave Power were sent thither temporarily, to do the voting, and drive from the polls the legal voters, who were often murdered in the process. Names, copied from the directories of cities in other States, were returned by thousands as legal voters in Kansas, in order to establish a Constitution abhorred by the people. This was their exemplification of Squatter Sovereignty. A Massachusetts Senator, distinguished for candor, courtesy, and stainless integrity, was half murdered by slaveholders, merely for having the manliness to state these facts to the assembled Congress of the nation. Peaceful emigrants from the North, who went to Kansas for no other purpose than to till the soil, erect mills, and establish manufactories, schools, and churches, were robbed, outraged, and murdered. For many months a war more ferocious than the warfare of wild Indians was car-

(1) The following Senators, Mr. Niles, of Connecticut, Mr. Dix, of New York, and Mr. Tappan, of Ohio, published statements that their votes had been obtained by false representations; and they declared that the case was the same with Mr. Heywood, of North Carolina.

ried on against a people almost unresisting, because they relied upon the Central Government for aid. And all this while, the power of the United States, wielded by the Slave Oligarchy, was on the side of the aggressors. They literally tied the stones, and let loose the mad dogs. This was the state of things when the hero of Osawatomie and his brave sons went to the rescue. It was he who first turned the tide of Border-Ruffian triumph, by showing them that blows were to be taken as well as given.

You may believe it or not, Gov. Wise, but it is certainly the truth that, because slaveholders so recklessly sowed the wind in Kansas, they reaped a whirlwind at Harper's Ferry.

The people of the North had a very strong attachment to the Union; but, by your desperate measure, you have weakened it beyond all power of restoration. They are not your enemies, as you suppose, but they cannot consent to be your tools for any ignoble task you may choose to propose. You must not judge of us by the crawling sinuosities of an Everett; or by our magnificent hound, whom you trained to hunt your poor cripples, and then sent him sneaking into a corner to die — not with shame for the base purposes to which his strength had been applied, but with vexation because you withheld from him the promised bone. Not by such as these must you judge the free, enlightened yeomanry of New England. A majority of them would rejoice to have the Slave States fulfill their oft-repeated threat of withdrawal from the Union. It has ceased to be a bugbear, for we begin to despair of being able, by any other process, to give the world the example of a real republic. The moral sense of these States is outraged by being accomplices in sustaining an institution vicious in all its aspects; and it is now generally understood that we purchase our disgrace at great pecuniary expense, If you would only make the offer of a separation in serious earnest, you would hear the hearty response of millions, "Go, gentlemen, and

> 'Stand not upon the order of your going,
> But go at once!'"

Yours, with all due respect,

L. MARIA CHILD.

## EXPLANATORY LETTER.

To the Editor of the New York Tribune:

Sir: I was much surprised to see my correspondence with Governor Wise published in your columns. As I have never given any person a copy, I presume you must have obtained it from Virginia. My proposal to go and nurse that brave and generous old man, who so willingly gives his life a sacrifice for God's oppressed poor, originated in a very simple and unmeritorious impulse of kindness. I heard his friends inquiring, "Has he no wife, or sister, that can go to nurse him? We are trying to ascertain, for he needs some one." My niece said she would go at once, if her health were strong enough to be trusted. I replied that my age and state of health rendered me a more suitable person to go, and that I would go most gladly. I accordingly wrote to Captain Brown, and enclosed the letter to Governor Wise. My intention was to slip away quietly, without having the affair made public. I packed my trunk and collected a quantity of old linen for lint, and awaited tidings from Virginia. When Governor Wise answered, he suggested the "imprudence of trying any experiment upon the peace of a society already greatly excited," &c. My husband and I took counsel together, and we both concluded that, as the noble old veteran was said to be fast recovering from his wounds, and as my presence might create a popular excitement unfavorable to such chance as the prisoner had for a fair trial, I had better wait until I received a reply from Captain Brown himself. Fearing to do him more harm than good by following my impulse, I waited for his own sanction. Meanwhile, his wife, said to be a brave-hearted Roman matron, worthy of such a mate, has gone to him, and I have received the following reply.

Respectfully yours,

L. MARIA CHILD.

Boston, Nov. 10th, 1859.

## MRS. CHILD TO JOHN BROWN.

WAYLAND, Mass., Oct. 26th, 1859.

DEAR CAPT. BROWN: Though personally unknown to you, you will recognize in my name an earnest friend of Kansas, when circumstances made that Territory the battle-ground between the antagonistic principles of slavery and freedom, which politicians so vainly strive to reconcile in the government of the United States.

Believing in peace principles, I cannot sympathize with the method you chose to advance the cause of freedom. But I honor your generous intentions—I admire your courage, moral and physical. I reverence you for the humanity which tempered your zeal. I sympathize with you in your cruel bereavement, your sufferings, and your wrongs. In brief, I love you and bless you.

Thousands of hearts are throbbing with sympathy as warm as mine. I think of you night and day, bleeding in prison, surrounded by hostile faces, sustained only by trust in God and your own strong heart. I long to nurse you — to speak to you sisterly words of sympathy and consolation. I have asked permission of Governor Wise to do so. If the request is not granted, I cherish the hope that these few words may at least reach your hands, and afford you some little solace. May you be strengthened by the conviction that no honest man ever sheds blood for freedom in vain, however much he may be mistaken in his efforts. May God sustain you, and carry you through whatsoever may be in store for you!

Yours, with heartfelt respect, sympathy and affection,

L. MARIA CHILD.

## REPLY OF JOHN BROWN.

Mrs. L. Maria Child:

My Dear Friend — Such you prove to be, though a stranger — your most kind letter has reached me, with the kind offer to come here and take care of me. Allow me to express my gratitude for your great sympathy, and at the same time to propose to you a different course, together with my reasons for wishing it. I should certainly be greatly pleased to become personally acquainted with one so gifted and so kind, but I cannot avoid seeing some objections to it, under present circumstances. First, I am in charge of a most humane gentleman, who, with his family, has rendered me every possible attention I have desired, or that could be of the least advantage; and I am so recovered of my wounds as no longer to require nursing. Then, again, it would subject you to great personal inconvenience and heavy expense, without doing me any good. Allow me to name to you another channel through which you may reach me with your sympathies much more effectually. I have at home a wife and three young daughters, the youngest but little over five years old, the oldest nearly sixteen. I have also two daughters-in-law, whose husbands have both fallen near me here. There is also another widow, Mrs. Thompson, whose husband fell here. Whether she is a mother or not, I cannot say. All these, my wife included, live at North Elba, Essex county, New York. I have a middle-aged son, who has been, in some degree, a cripple from his childhood, who would have as much as he could well do to earn a living. He was a most dreadful sufferer in Kansas, and lost all he had laid up. He has not enough to clothe himself for the winter comfortably. I have no living son, or son-in-law, who did not suffer terribly in Kansas.

Now, dear friend, would you not as soon contribute fifty cents now, and a like sum yearly, for the relief of those very poor and deeply afflicted persons, to enable them to supply themselves and their children with bread and very plain clothing, and to enable the children to receive a common English education? Will you also devote your own energies to induce

others to join you in giving a like amount, or any other amount, to constitute a little fund for the purpose named?

I cannot see how your coming here can do me the least good; and I am quite certain you can do immense good where you are. I am quite cheerful under all my afflicting circumstances and prospects; having, as I humbly trust, "the peace of God which passeth all understanding," to rule in my heart. You may make such use of this as you see fit. God Almighty bless and reward you a thousand fold!

Yours in sincerity and truth,

JOHN BROWN.

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## LETTER OF MRS. MASON.

ALTO, King George's Co., Va., Nov. 11th, 1859.

Do you read your Bible, Mrs. Child? If you do, read there, "Woe unto you, hypocrites," and take to yourself with two-fold damnation that terrible sentence; for, rest assured, in the day of judgment it shall be more tolerable for those thus scathed by the awful denunciation of the Son of God, than for you. *You* would soothe with sisterly and motherly care the hoary-headed murderer of Harper's Ferry! A man whose aim and intention was to incite the horrors of a servile war — to condemn women of your own race, ere death closed their eyes on their sufferings from violence and outrage, to see their husbands and fathers murdered, their children butchered, the ground strewed with the brains of their babes. The antecedents of Brown's band proved them to have been the offscourings of the earth; and what would have been our fate had they found as many sympathizers in Virginia as they seem to have in Massachusetts?

Now, compare yourself with those your "sympathy" would devote to such ruthless ruin, and say, on that "word of honor, which never has been broken," would *you* stand by the bedside of an old negro, dying of a hopeless disease, to alleviate his sufferings as far as human aid could? Have *you* ever watched the last, lingering illness of a consumptive, to soothe,

as far as in you lay, the inevitable fate? Do *you* soften the pangs of maternity in those around you by all the care and comfort you can give? Do *you* grieve with those *near* you, even though their sorrows resulted from their own misconduct? Did *you* ever sit up until the "wee hours" to complete a dress for a motherless child, that she might appear on Christmas day in a new one, along with her more fortunate companions? *We* do these and more for our servants, and why? Because we endeavor *to do our duty in that state of life it has pleased God to place us.* In his revealed word we read our duties to them — theirs to us are there also — "Not only to the good and gentle, but to the froward." — (Peter II: 18.) Go thou and do likewise, and keep away from Charlestown. If the stories read in the public prints be true, of the sufferings of the poor of the North, you need not go far for objects of charity. "Thou hypocrite! take first the beam out of thine own eye, then shalt thou see clearly to pull the mote out of thy neighbor's." But if, indeed, you do lack objects of sympathy near you, go to Jefferson county, to the family of George Turner, a noble, true-hearted man, whose devotion to his friend (Col. Washington) causing him to risk his life, was shot down like a dog. Or to that of old Beckham, whose grief at the murder of his negro subordinate made him needlessly expose himself to the aim of the assassin Brown. And when you can equal in deeds of love and charity to those *around* you, what is shown by nine-tenths of the Virginia plantations, then by your "sympathy" whet the knives for our throats, and kindle the torch that fires our homes. *You* reverence Brown for his clemency to his prisoners! Prisoners! and how taken? Unsuspecting workmen, going to their daily duties; unarmed gentlemen, taken from their beds at the dead hour of the night, by six men doubly and trebly armed. Suppose he had hurt a hair of their heads, do you suppose one of the band of desperadoes would have left the engine-house alive? And did not he know that his treatment of them was his only hope of life then, or of clemency afterward? Of course he did. The United States troops could not have prevented him from being torn limb from limb.

I will add, in conclusion, no Southerner ought, after your letter to Governor Wise and to Brown, to read a line of your composition, or to touch a magazine which bears your name

in its lists of contributors; and in this we hope for the "sympathy," at least of those at the North who deserve the name of woman.

M. J. C. MASON.

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## REPLY OF MRS. CHILD.

WAYLAND, Mass., Dec. 17th, 1859.

Prolonged absence from home has prevented my answering your letter so soon as I intended. I have no disposition to retort upon you the "two-fold damnation," to which you consign me. On the contrary, I sincerely wish you well, both in this world and the next. If the anathema proved a safety valve to your own boiling spirit, it did some good to you, while it fell harmless upon me. Fortunately for all of us, the Heavenly Father rules His universe by laws, which the passions or the prejudices of mortals have no power to change.

As for John Brown, his reputation may be safely trusted to the impartial pen of History; and his motives will be righteously judged by Him who knoweth the secrets of all hearts. Men, however great they may be, are of small consequence in comparison with principles; and the principle for which John Brown died is the question at issue between us.

You refer me to the Bible, from which you quote the favorite text of slaveholders: —

"Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." — 1 Peter, 2: 18.

Abolitionists also have favorite texts, to some of which I would call your attention: —

"Remember those that are in bonds as bound with them." — Heb. 13: 3.

"Hide the outcasts. Bewray not him that wandereth. Let mine outcasts dwell with thee. Be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler." — Isa. 16: 3, 4.

"Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee. He shall dwell with thee where it liketh him best. Thou shalt not oppress him." — Deut. 23: 15, 16.

"Open thy mouth for the dumb, in the cause of all such as are appointed

to destruction. Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy." — Prov. 29: 8, 9.

"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." — Isa. 58: 1.

I would especially commend to slaveholders the following portions of that volume, wherein you say God has revealed the duty of masters: —

"Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." — Col. 4: 1.

"Neither be ye called masters; for one is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." — Matt. 23: 8, 10.

"Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." — Matt. 7: 12.

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?" — Isa. 58: 6.

"They have given a boy for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink." — Joel 3: 3.

"He that oppresseth the poor, reproacheth his Maker." — Prov. 14: 31.

"Rob not the poor, because he is poor; neither oppress the afflicted. For the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those who spoiled them." — Prov. 22: 22, 23.

"Woe unto him that useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work." — Jer. 22: 13.

"Let him that stole, steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands." — Eph. 4: 28.

"Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; to turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless." — Isa. 10: 1, 2.

"If I did despise the cause of my man-servant or of my maid-servant, when they contend with me, what then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer Him?" — Job 31: 13, 14.

"Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken. Therefore snares are round about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee; and darkness, that thou canst not see." — Job 22: 9, 10, 11.

"Behold, the hire of your laborers, who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter; ye have condemned and killed the just." — James 5: 4.

If the appropriateness of these texts is not apparent, I will try to make it so, by evidence drawn entirely from *Southern* sources. The Abolitionists are not such an ignorant set of fanatics as you suppose. They *know* whereof they affirm. They are familiar with the laws of the Slave States, which are alone sufficient to inspire abhorrence in any humane heart

or reflecting mind not perverted by the prejudices of education and custom. I might fill many letters with significant extracts from your statute-books; but I have space only to glance at a few, which indicate the *leading* features of the system you cherish so tenaciously.

The universal rule of the slave State is, that "the child follows the condition of its *mother*." This is an index to many things. Marriages between white and colored people are forbidden by law; yet a very large number of the slaves are brown or yellow. When Lafayette visited this country in his old age, he said he was very much struck by the great change in the colored population of Virginia; that in the time of the Revolution, nearly all the household slaves were black, but when he returned to America, he found very few of them black. The advertisements in Southern newspapers often describe runaway slaves that "pass themselves for white men." Sometimes they are described as having "straight, light hair, blue eyes, and clear complexion." This could not be, unless their fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers had been white men. But as their *mothers* were slaves, the law pronounces *them* slaves, subject to be sold on the auction-block whenever the necessities or convenience of their masters or mistresses require it. The sale of one's own children, brothers, or sisters, has an ugly aspect to those who are unaccustomed to it; and, obviously, it cannot have a good moral influence, that law and custom should render licentiousness a *profitable* vice.

Throughout the Slave States, the testimony of no colored person, bond or free, can be received against a white man. You have some laws, which, on the face of them, would seem to restrain inhuman men from murdering or mutilating slaves; but they are rendered nearly null by the law I have cited. Any drunken master, overseer, or patrol, may go into the negro cabins, and commit what outrages he pleases, with perfect impunity, if no white person is present who chooses to witness against him. North Carolina and Georgia leave a large loop-hole for escape, even if white persons are present, when murder is committed. A law to punish persons for "maliciously killing a slave" has this remarkable qualification: "Always provided that this act shall not extend to any slave dying of moderate correction." We at the North find it difficult to

understand how *moderate* punishment can cause *death*. I have read several of your law-books attentively, and I find no cases of punishment for the murder of a slave, except by fines paid to the *owner*, to indemnify him for the loss of his *property:* the same as if his horse or cow had been killed. In the South Carolina Reports is a case where the State had indicted Guy Raines for the murder of a slave named Isaac. It was proved that William Gray, the owner of Isaac, had given him *a thousand lashes*. The poor creature made his escape, but was caught, and delivered to the custody of Raines, to be carried to the county jail. Because he refused to go, Raines gave him five hundred lashes, and he died soon after. The counsel for Raines proposed that he should be allowed to acquit himself by his *own oath*. The Court decided against it, because *white witnesses* had testified; but the Court of Appeals afterward decided he *ought* to have been exculpated by his own oath, and he was *acquitted*. Small indeed is the chance for justice to a slave, when his own color are not allowed to testify, if they see him maimed or his children murdered; when he has slaveholders for Judges and Jurors; when the murderer can exculpate himself by his own oath; and when the law provides that it is no murder to kill a slave by "moderate correction"!

Your laws uniformly declare that "a slave shall be deemed a chattel personal in the hands of his owner, to all intents, constructions, and purposes whatsoever." This, of course, involves the right to sell his children, as if they were pigs; also, to take his wife from him "for any intent or purpose whatsoever." Your laws also make it death for him to resist a white man, however brutally he may be treated, or however much his family may be outraged before his eyes. If he attempts to run away, your laws allow any man to shoot him.

By your laws, all a slave's earnings belong to his master. He can neither receive donations nor transmit property. If his master allows him some hours to work for himself, and by great energy and perseverance he earns enough to buy his own bones and sinews, his master may make him pay two or three times over, and he has no redress. Three such cases have come within my own knowledge. Even a written promise from his master has no legal value, because a slave can make no contracts.

Your laws also systematically aim at keeping the minds of the colored people in the most abject state of ignorance. If white people attempt to teach them to read or write, they are punished by imprisonment or fines; if they attempt to teach others, they are punished with from twenty to thirty-nine lashes each. It cannot be said that the anti-slavery agitation produced such laws, for they date much further back; many of them when we were Provinces. They are the *necessities* of the system, which, being itself an outrage upon human nature, can be sustained only by perpetual outrages.

The next reliable source of information is the advertisements in the Southern papers. In the North Carolina (Raleigh) *Standard*, Mr. Micajah Ricks advertises, "Runaway, a negro woman and her two children. A few days before she went off, I burned her with a hot iron on the left side of her face. I tried to make the letter M." In the Natchez *Courier*, Mr. J. P. Ashford advertises a runaway negro girl, with "a good many teeth missing, and the letter A branded on her cheek and forehead." In the Lexington (Ky.) *Observer*, Mr. William Overstreet advertises a runaway negro with "his left eye out, scars from a dirk on his left arm, and much scarred with the whip." I might quote from hundreds of such advertisements, offering rewards for runaways, "dead or alive," and describing them with "ears cut off," "jaws broken," "scarred by rifle-balls," &c.

Another source of information is afforded by your "Fugitives from Injustice," with many of whom I have conversed freely. I have seen scars of the whip and marks of the branding-iron, and I have listened to their heart-breaking sobs, while they told of "piccaninnies" torn from their arms and sold.

Another source of information is furnished by emancipated slaveholders. Sarah M. Grimke, daughter of the late Judge Grimke, of the Supreme Court of South Carolina, testifies as follows: "As I left my native State on account of Slavery, and deserted the home of my fathers to escape the sound of the lash and the shrieks of tortured victims, I would gladly bury in oblivion the recollection of those scenes with which I have been familiar. But this cannot be. They come over my memory like gory spectres, and implore me, with resistless power, in the name of a God of mercy, in the name of a

crucified Saviour, in the name of humanity, for the sake of the slaveholder, as well as the slave, to bear witness to the horrors of the Southern prison-house." She proceeds to describe dreadful tragedies, the actors in which she says were "men and women of the first families in South Carolina;" and that their cruelties did not, in the slightest degree, affect their standing in society. Her sister, Angelina Grimke, declared: "While I live, and Slavery lives, I *must* testify against it. Not merely for the sake of my poor brothers and sisters in bonds; for even were Slavery no curse to its victims, the exercise of arbitrary power works such fearful ruin upon the hearts of slaveholders, that I should feel impelled to labor and pray for its overthrow with my latest breath." Among the horrible barbarities she enumerates is the case of a girl thirteen years old, who was flogged to death by her master. She says: "I asked a prominent lawyer, who belonged to one of the first families in the State, whether the murderer of this helpless child could not be indicted, and he coolly replied that the slave was Mr. ———'s property, and if he chose to suffer the *loss*, no one else had anything to do with it." She proceeds to say: "I felt there could be for me no rest in the midst of such outrages and pollutions. Yet I saw nothing of Slavery in its most vulgar and repulsive forms. I saw it in the city, among the fashionable and the honorable, where it was garnished by refinement and decked out for show. It is my deep, solemn, deliberate conviction that this is a cause worth dying for. I say so from what I have seen, and heard, and known, in a land of Slavery, whereon rest the darkness of Egypt and the sin of Sodom." I once asked Miss Angelina if she thought Abolitionists exaggerated the horrors of Slavery. She replied, with earnest emphasis: "They *cannot* be exaggerated. It is impossible for imagination to go beyond the facts." To a lady who observed that the time had not yet come for agitating the subject, she answered: "I apprehend if thou wert a *slave*, toiling in the fields of Carolina, thou wouldst think the time had *fully* come."

Mr. Thome, of Kentucky, in the course of his eloquent lectures on this subject, said: "I breathed my first breath in an atmosphere of Slavery. But though I am heir to a slave inheritance, I am bold to denounce the whole system as an outrage, a complication of crimes, and wrongs, and cruelties, that make angels weep."

"Mr. Allen, of Alabama, in a discussion with the students at Lane Seminary, in 1834, told of a slave who was tied up and beaten all day, with a paddle full of holes. At night, his flesh was literally pounded to a jelly. The punishment was inflicted within hearing of the Academy and the Public Green. But no one took any notice of it. No one thought any wrong was done. At our house, it is so common to hear screams from a neighboring plantation, that we think nothing of it. Lest any one should think that the slaves are *generally* well treated, and that the cases I have mentioned are exceptions, let me be distinctly understood that cruelty is the *rule*, and kindness is the exception."

In the same discussion, a student from Virginia, after relating cases of great cruelty, said: "Such things are common all over Virginia; at least, so far as I am acquainted. But the planters generally avoid punishing their slaves before *strangers*."

Miss Mattie Griffith, of Kentucky, whose entire property consisted in slaves, emancipated them all. The noble-hearted girl wrote to me: "I shall go forth into the world penniless; but I shall work with a light heart, and, best of all, I shall live with an easy conscience." Previous to this generous resolution, she had never read any Abolition document, and entertained the common Southern prejudice against them. But her own observation so deeply impressed her with the enormities of Slavery, that she was impelled to publish a book, called "The Autobiography of a Female Slave." I read it with thrilling interest; but some of the scenes made my nerves quiver so painfully, that I told her I hoped they were too highly colored. She shook her head sadly, and replied: "I am sorry to say that every incident in the book has come within my own knowledge."

St. George Tucker, Judge and Professor of Law in Virginia, speaking of the legalized murder of runaways, said: "Such are the cruelties to which a state of Slavery gives birth — such the horrors to which the human mind is capable of being reconciled by its adoption." Alluding to our struggle in '76, he said: "While we proclaim our resolution to live free or die, we imposed on our fellow-men, of different complexion, a Slavery ten thousand times worse than the utmost extremity of the oppressions of which we complained."

Governor Giles, in a Message to the Legislature of Virginia, referring to the custom of selling free colored people into Slavery, as a punishment for offences not capital, said: "Slavery must be admitted to be a *punishment of the highest order;* and, according to the just rule for the apportionment of punishment to crimes, it ought to be applied only to *crimes of the highest order*. The most distressing reflection in the application of this punishment to female offenders is, that it extends to their offspring; and the innocent are thus punished with the guilty." Yet one hundred and twenty thousand innocent babes in this country are annually subjected to a punishment which your Governor declared "ought to be applied only to crimes of the highest order."

Jefferson said: "One *day* of American Slavery is worse than a *thousand years* of that which we rose in arms to oppose." Alluding to insurrections, he said: "The Almighty has no attribute that can take side with us in such a contest."

John Randolph declared: "Every planter is a sentinel at his own door. Every Southern mother, when she hears an alarm of fire in the night, instinctively presses her infant closer to her bosom."

Looking at the system of slavery in the light of all this evidence, do you candidly think we deserve "two-fold damnation" for detesting it? Can you not believe that we may hate the system, and yet be truly your friends? I make allowance for the excited state of your mind, and for the prejudices induced by education. I do not care to change your opinion of me; but I do wish you could be persuaded to examine this subject dispassionately, for the sake of the prosperity of Virginia, and the welfare of unborn generations, both white and colored. For thirty years, Abolitionists have been trying to reason with slaveholders, through the press, and in the halls of Congress. Their efforts, though directed to the *masters only*, have been met with violence and abuse almost equal to that poured on the head of John Brown. Yet surely we, as a portion of the Union, involved in the expense, the degeneracy, the danger, and the disgrace, of this iniquitous and fatal system, have a *right* to speak about it, and a right to be *heard* also. At the North, we willingly publish pro-slavery arguments, and ask only a fair field and no favor for the other side. But you will not even allow your own citi-

zens a chance to examine this important subject. Your letter to me is published in Northern papers, as well as Southern; but my reply will not be allowed to appear in any Southern paper. The despotic measures you take to silence investigation, and shut out the light from your own white population, prove how little reliance you have on the strength of your cause. In this enlightened age, all despotisms *ought* to come to an end by the agency of moral and rational means. But if they resist such agencies, it is in the order of Providence that they *must* come to an end by violence. History is full of such lessons.

Would that the veil of prejudice could be removed from your eyes. If you would candidly examine the statements of Governor Hincks of the British West Indies, and of the Rev. Mr. Bleby, long time a Missionary in those Islands, both before and after emancipation, you could not fail to be convinced that Cash is a more powerful incentive to labor than the Lash, and far safer also. One fact in relation to those Islands is very significant. While the working people were slaves, it was always necessary to order out the military during the Christmas holidays; but, since emancipation, not a soldier is to be seen. A hundred John Browns might land there, without exciting the slightest alarm.

To the personal questions you ask me, I will reply in the name of all the women of New England. It would be extremely difficult to find any woman in our villages who does *not* sew for the poor, and watch with the sick, whenever occasion requires. We pay our domestics generous wages, with which they can purchase as many Christmas gowns as they please; a process far better for their characters, as well as our own, than to receive their clothing as a charity, after being deprived of just payment for their labor. I have never known an instance where the "pangs of maternity" did not meet with requisite assistance; and here at the North, after we have helped the mothers, *we do not sell the babies.*

I readily believe what you state concerning the kindness of many Virginia matrons. It is creditable to their hearts: but after all, the best that can be done in that way is a poor equivalent for the perpetual wrong done to the slaves, and the terrible liabilities to which they are always subject. Kind masters and mistresses among you are merely lucky accidents.

If any one *chooses* to be a brutal despot, your laws and customs give him complete power to do so. And the lot of those slaves who have the kindest masters is exceedingly precarious. In case of death, or pecuniary difficulties, or marriages in the family, they may at any time be suddenly transferred from protection and indulgence to personal degradation, or extreme severity; and if they should try to escape from such sufferings, anybody is authorized to shoot them down like dogs.

With regard to your declaration that "no Southerner ought henceforth to read a line of my composition," I reply that I have great satisfaction in the consciousness of having nothing to lose in that quarter. Twenty-seven years ago, I published a book called "An Appeal in behalf of that class of Americans called Africans." It influenced the minds of several young men, afterward conspicuous in public life, through whose agency the cause was better served than it could have been by me. From that time to this, I have labored too earnestly for the slave to be agreeable to slaveholders. Literary popularity was never a paramount object with me, even in my youth; and, now that I am old, I am utterly indifferent to it. But, if I cared for the exclusion you threaten, I should at least have the consolation of being exiled with honorable company. Dr. Channing's writings, mild and candid as they are, breathe what you would call arrant treason. William C. Bryant, in his capacity of editor, is openly on our side. The inspired muse of Whittier has incessantly sounded the trumpet for moral warfare with your iniquitous institution; and his stirring tones have been answered, more or less loudly, by Pierpont, Lowell, and Longfellow. Emerson, the Plato of America, leaves the scholastic seclusion he loves so well, and, disliking noise with all his poetic soul, bravely takes his stand among the trumpeters. George W. Curtis, the brilliant writer, the eloquent lecturer, the elegant man of the world, lays the wealth of his talent on the altar of Freedom, and makes common cause with rough-shod reformers.

The genius of Mrs. Stowe carried the outworks of your institution at one dash, and left the citadel open to besiegers, who are pouring in amain. In the church, on the ultra-liberal side, it is assailed by the powerful battering-ram of Theodore Parker's eloquence. On the extreme orthodox side is set a

huge fire, kindled by the burning words of Dr. Cheever. Between them is Henry Ward Beecher, sending a shower of keen arrows into your entrenchments; and with him ride a troop of sharp-shooters from all sects. If you turn to the literature of England or France, you will find your institution treated with as little favor. The fact is, the whole civilized world proclaims Slavery an outlaw, and the best intellect of the age is active in hunting it down.

L. MARIA CHILD.

## THE TOUCHSTONE.

BY WILLIAM ALLINGHAME.

A man there came, whence none could tell,
Bearing a touchstone in his hand,
And tested all things in the land
By its unerring spell.

A thousand transformations rare,
From fair to foul, from foul to fair;
The golden crown he did not share,
Nor scorn the beggar's clothes.

Of heirloom jewels, prized so much,
Were many changed to chips and clods,
And even statues of the gods
Crumbled beneath its touch.

Then angrily the people cried,
"The loss outweighs the profit far,
Our goods suffice us as they are,
We will not have them tried."

But since they could not so avail
To check his unrelenting quest,
They seized him, saying, "Let him test
How real is our jail."

But though they slew him with their swords,
And in the fire the touchstone burned,
Its doings could not be o'erturned,
Its undoings restored.

And when, to stop all future harm,
They strewed his ashes to the breeze,
They little guessed each grain of these
Conveyed the perfect charm.

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